

cosmetic tattooing

Sick of rushing to do your make-up every morning?
Cosmetic tattooing may be the answer.

What is it?

Cosmetic tattooing, also called micro-pigmentation, is a cosmetic treatment where colour pigments are inserted into the dermis layer of the skin to define eyes, brows, lips and cheeks. Many hues are available, such as blushing pink for lips, plus various skin colours to cover scars.

Cosmetic tattooing can also be used as part of more serious applications, such as the reconstruction of nipples after breast cancer surgery.

Isn't it just permanent make-up?

In Australia, it's illegal to refer to cosmetic tattooing as 'permanent make-up'. This is because all cosmetic

tattooing will fade to some degree over time, due to a number of individual factors.

"In the US, practitioners have been sued when they called it 'permanent' and it didn't last," says cosmetic tattooist Janesse Taylor-Saar. "In other cases, they've been sued because 'semi-permanent' tattooing has lasted 10 to 15 years – for too long.

"It depends on the skin, the colour, the mix of the pigment and the method used as to whether you get longevity or not."

How is it done?

Taylor-Saar uses a purpose-made, hand-held machine that looks like a fat pen and

can be used with one to three needles, depending on how precise the work needs to be. "The machine I use is a lot lighter than a traditional tattooing machine," she says. "It's a lot safer too, and, because the parts are disposable, there's no cross-contamination."

Another popular tool is the SofTap, which is gentler than the traditional tattooing machine, but has a less permanent effect. The SofTap uses many fine points, instead of one needle, to place pigment into the upper layers of the skin.

What can I expect?

A patch test is done to see if you're allergic to the

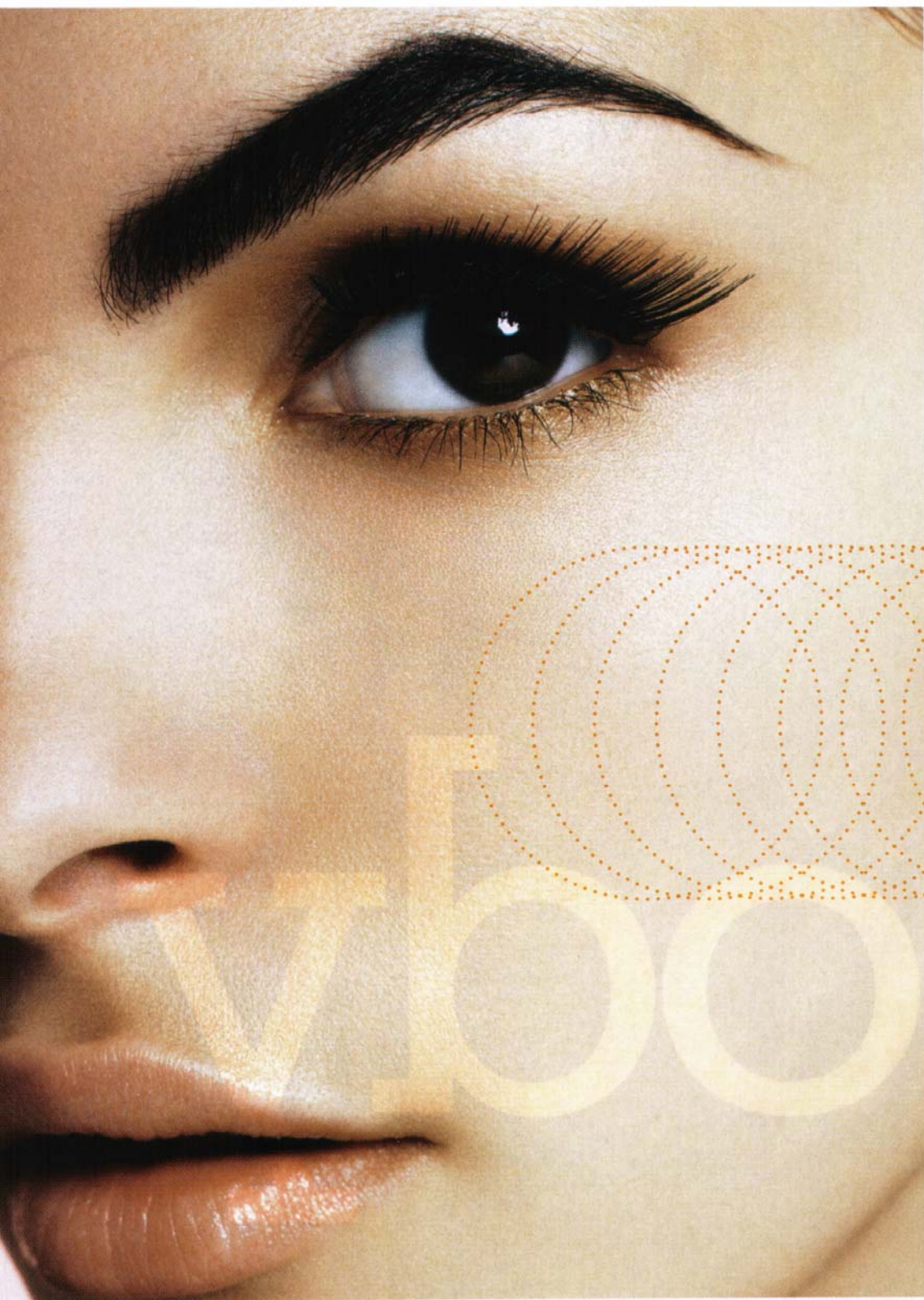
pigment. Most colours used nowadays are non-organic, so the risk of reaction is quite low. You will then select the colours and effect you want, and the technician will sketch the area to be tattooed with a sterile surgical pen.

An anaesthetic gel is applied to the area and the technician then applies the pigment into the top layer of skin.

Who's it right for?

Cosmetic tattooing is often chosen by those seeking a beauty enhancement, as well as people who are unable to apply make-up due to poor eyesight or unsteady hands.

It's also useful for people who are allergic to traditional make-up, alopecia sufferers and those who want to improve the appearance of scars or facial markings.



"I do areolas after breast cancer and I can create a new lip for people who've had lip cancer," Taylor-Saar says.

"At the moment, I'm working with a man who has vitiligo, which is a skin disease that lightens the skin."

Is it painful?

The sensation can be painful, particularly in the

sensitive facial areas. To help ease discomfort, a topical anaesthetic is applied for eye area procedures, while a dental block – numbing the lip via a needle – is used for lip tattooing.

Side-effects?

Expect swelling from two to 72 hours and tenderness for a few days. The colour may

be darker than you expected for the first week, but after six weeks, the true colour will have set. Antihistamine and cold compresses will help with discomfort.

What happens if the tattooist makes a mistake?

Taylor-Saar admits that some practitioners go outside the lines. If the mistake is very obvious and in a dark colour, it will need to be lasered.

Cost

- Set of lips – \$880
- Top and bottom eyeliner – \$790
- Eyebrows – \$770
- Hair strokes – \$880
- Breasts – \$630
- Facelift scars – \$330

How to find a good tattooist

"Find out if they're accredited," she says. "You also want to look at photos of their work. There are people out there doing it very cheaply and it pays to do your research." ❖

FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ Janesse Taylor-Saar,
Skin Medics Clinic
(02) 9571 8622, email:
info@skinmedics.com.au